

What is Life for Job Order Street Sweepers in the City Governments of Davao Region? A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract- *The purpose of this phenomenological undertaking is to describe the lived realities of the street sweepers working in the City Local Government Units (CLGUs) in Davao Region, Philippines. In-depth Interview (IDI) and Focus Group Discussion were employed in collecting the data. Findings revealed that they are working with no security of tenure leading to meager compensation and non-existent benefits. Dearth of necessary work implements and bureaucratic red tape were found out as predicaments encountered other than insecurity and vulnerability of the work. In solving the problems encountered, loan dependence and moonlighting turned out to be the primary solution aside from perseverance to the job, detachment and nonchalance as well as their wishful thinking. Out from the generated results, it can be learned that they desire recognition and respect and environmental responsibility among citizenry needs to be cultivated. Amidst the deprivation due to the nature of their employment, there is pride and satisfaction in doing their job. Though a street sweeper's work is hard and unenviable, job security continues to be an elusive dream.*

Keywords- *phenomenological inquiry; job order street sweepers; job satisfaction; quality of life; Philippines*

1. INTRODUCTION

Street sweepers are those who are engaged in cleaning the public places especially in the area of urbanized cities. In our society, street sweeping is considered as demeaning job as it involves the filth and waste usually the people produced. Oftentimes, the society neglects them as they are invisible as if their work is insignificant. In India as cited by Sabde and Zodpey (2008)[68], the country's traditional culture has stigmatized street sweeping as a filthy and lowly occupation. India's caste system, categorized street sweepers under the lowest rank of Indian society – the Dalits (Weber, 2007)[85] wherein even up to now, these group of workers are being oppressed and discriminated (Navsarjan Organization, 2017)[52]. Marais (2014)[44], labelled them as one of the most neglected sectors of the country's labor force. In the Open Space Institute Annual Report (2008)[55], it was written that the citizens tend to underestimate the efforts of those who manually sweep the streets where we live, work or walk.

Unknown to many, street sweepers play significant roles in our society. Removing of debris from streets, collecting solid waste, disposing and recycling waste material are just some of the works entailed in their job (Kabir, Farhana, Akter, Jesmin, & Ali, 2015)[36]. For big cities, Sabde and Zodpey (2008)[68] recognized the role of the street sweepers as very significant in maintaining the

health and hygiene of the cities. Air and water quality are the reasons stipulated by Kuehl, Marti and Schilling (2008) in their study as they emphasized the urgency and importance for urban cities to have street sweepers.

Lowly as it is to many, without street sweepers our community can become a warren of poison, death, of physical and moral barbarity. Street dirt can cause significant pollution wherein according to the Pacific Northwest Pollution Prevention Resource Center (2017)[57], sweeping is an essential element to manage these less visible pollutants.

Since street sweepers are exposed daily with dirt, they are mostly affected by different kinds of health problems. They could ignore the foul odor but the possibility of acquiring illness is high because of the contract diseases obtained from the garbage they have to clean. Subsequently, since the working place of street sweepers are so hazardous they are most likely to suffer health accidents aside from the fact that they become prone in getting trouble with robbers, drug addicts and hooligans (Kabir et al., 2015)[36].

Unfortunately in reality, many if not all countries in the world, a street sweeper who is doing risky tasks is not covered with sufficient protection, compensation and benefits. In developing country like Philippines wherein street sweepers usually clean the waste manually, aside from there is little, if any, protection to workers from direct contact and injury and virtually no dust control at

the workplace, most of them are employed on a contractual or seasonal basis with a minimum wage (Robes, 2016)[67]. A street sweeper who is under open-ended contract could earn only as much as ₱5,100 per month for a daily rate of ₱255 that is if they will have to work 20 days in a month (Andrade & Tubeza, 2012)[3]. Inasmuch as their lives are impoverished, working in a street is a no choice at all compounded by various socioeconomic factors such as poverty and lack of education.

2. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to provide data to aid in policy formulation and or to serve as evidence to enact House Bill 3434 known as “Cleaning Workers Act” in which the status is still pending with the Committee on Labor and Employment since September 9, 2016. This bill is an act instituting policies for the protection and welfare of cleaning workers such as street sweepers and garbage collectors as introduced by Representative Florida P. Robes.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To facilitate the attainment of the abovementioned purpose of the study, the researcher was guided with the subsequent research questions as follows:

1. What are the lived experiences of the street sweepers in the urban cities of Davao Region?
2. How do they cope in their daily quest of life?
3. What lessons and insights can be shared by the participants?

4. THEORETICAL LENS

This study is anchored on Paradox of Well-being by Herschbach (2002)[33] - an empirical phenomenon which has been called paradoxical in the field of social science. The paradox objectively meant that negative factors in one’s life have relatively little effect on subjective quality of life despite the disadvantaged income and mistreatment experienced as workers wherein efforts are tend to be underestimated. Relatively, this is interrelated to the stand point of Poggi (2010) who speak about the two main processes that form worker’s aspirations and create the relativity in people’s evaluation - social comparisons and environmental adaptation. Referring to social comparisons, the author relates that people are able to construct aspirations about working conditions by adjusting their perceptions, making comparison from their past experiences, reference groups, living and social environment or personal future expectations. However, when individual is experiencing bad working condition he or she may get used to such contexts and therefore could adjust perceptions about the lived reality; this is what the author meant about environmental adaptation.

Moreover, to further enrich and extend the theoretical frame of this study, this study was guided also on a phenomenon called “Satisfaction Paradox” also known as

the Zapf Theory by German Sociologist Wolfgang Zapf which explains that in reality there are workers who are living in objectively deprived conditions yet often claimed to be satisfied with their quality of life; the latter author calls such people “adapted” (Zapf, 1984)[89].

5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Street sweepers play an important role for keeping the cities clean. However, this group of working sector is often neglected and characterized by a sense of “voicelessness” – an esoteric silence fueled by a dire need to survive. It is this respect that this study is made possible since the end output of this endeavor will serve as beneficial to the concerned stakeholders.

Primarily, to the working street sweepers most specifically in the Davao Region, this undertaking will serve as their voice and an avenue for them to air out their sentiments and to share to the world how they live their lives and how it is to become like them. Secondly, to the City Mayor of concerned Local Government Units (LGUs), the information which will be revealed in this study give insights to the local chief executives of each city as to necessary actions that should be considered in uplifting the quality of life of these vulnerable group of workers. Thirdly, the result of the study may become beneficial and applicable to the regional office of Department of Labor and Employment since this would positively turn-out to be an aid for the concerned office to resolve the possibility of lapses and provision of necessary attention to prompt more sensitive actions, programs and/or services towards the needs of the workers and hereby facilitate effective employment mechanism not just limiting to Davao Region but also in all other regions wherein street workers are present in order to give the dignity of life that they deserve. Lastly, to all the research enthusiasts and citizens, the end output of the study is projected to encourage more academic deliberation relevant to the issue and/or concerned subject aside from providing insights to the people to be a compassionate and considerate individual towards the life and work of these workers as part of their social responsibility.

6. METHODOLOGY

6.1 Research Design

This undertaking employed a qualitative research method using a phenomenological inquiry. Creswell (1998)[19] explained that when you want to describe the meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals about a concept or the phenomenon, a phenomenological inquiry is best suited since it will help you emphasize the meaning of such experience from a number of individuals. Moreover, Wertz (2005)[86] described phenomenology as a low hovering, in dwelling, meditative philosophy that glories in the concreteness of person world relationship and accord lived experiences. Yuksel and Yildirim (2015)[88] opined that if you want to

seek reality of individuals on their lived experiences, the process of phenomenology as a methodological framework is the ideal one to employ; the authors specifically referred it as existential philosophy – a phenomenological philosophy which reflects a need to focus on lived experience.

6.2 Research Participants

There were 12 street sweepers who participated in the in-depth interview; two representatives in every city in Davao Region. Creswell (1998)[19] recommended that for a phenomenological study, the process of collecting information must involve primarily an in-depth interview (IDI) from three to 25 subjects since the important point is to describe the meaning of a small number of individuals who have experienced the phenomenon. For the support, affirmation and validation of the initial interview, Focus Group Discussion session subsequently followed as participated by seven other street sweepers. The conduct of another interview for clarification and verification in a phenomenological undertaking is essential to supply substantial additional needed data (Creswell, 2007)[20]. The selection criteria of the main informants – the street sweepers whom referred also as co-researchers are street sweepers who are employed in the Local Government Unit under job order, has been working as street sweepers for at least two years and are married with dependents of at least one. Whereas, the exclusion criteria of the informants are those street sweepers who have regular/permanent status, unmarried and/or have no dependents are not qualified to become a research participant in this undertaking.

6.3 Data Analysis

Interviews conducted were transcribed by the researcher to become acquainted with the data (Reissman, 1993)[65]. The data were analysed after conducting phenomenological interviews with co-researchers following Moustakas' data analysing procedure and as suggested by Creswell (2007)[20].

As suggested by Moustakas (1994)[50], bracketing subjectivity described as 'epoche' or setting aside of prejudgements and pre-dispositions towards the phenomenon should be applied. After such, the steps discussed below were utilized detailing the process as discussed in the foregoing statements.

First step was Horizontalization; in this particular step, researchers looked at all data as every statement has equal value; significant statements were figured out and obtained. Irrelevant statements and or repetitive or overlapping were ignored. Using spreadsheet application, the researchers created a list of coded verbatim transcripts considered as significant statements. The verbatim statements were then translated to English language and phenomena outside the scope of investigation with its verbatim statements deleted. The remaining parts of the data after cleaning were termed as horizons – these are the textual meanings or constituent parts of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994)[50].

The second step was Reduction of experiences to the invariant constituents. The target of this particular step was to obtain the textural language as the description of the phenomenological reduction. The textural language was initially obtained from the gathered horizons clustered into themes in which the translated data were splitted into meaning units so that each theme will only have one meaning. Thematic clustering to create core themes is the third step which was deployed. In this step, as suggested by (Moustakas, 1994)[50], the researchers clustered and created themes of the invariant constituents which are the horizons and came up with the core themes of the experience of the phenomenon.

The fourth step was the Comparison of multiple data sources to validate the invariant constituents. In this step, the themes derived from the experiences of the participants which were collected through IDIs were compared with FGD to verify accuracy thus to represent across the sources of data. The fifth step was constructing of individual textural descriptions of participants. The objective of this step was to come up a textural description in a narrative form which explains the perceptions of the participants regarding the phenomenon. In so doing, the researchers described the experiences of the co-researchers using verbatim excerpts from their interview supported by the other participants – the immediate supervisors. The researcher explained the meaning units in a narrative format in order to facilitate understanding of the lived experiences of the participants. Construction of individual structural descriptions was the sixth step. In this step, the researchers imagined how experiences occurred which became the basis in creating structures. The formulated structures were based on the textural or textual descriptions and imaginative variation.

The seventh step was the construction of composite structural descriptions. In this particular step, the researchers incorporated the textual description into a structure explaining how the experience occurred from the concerning co-researchers. Also, the structures at the end of each paragraph in order to create structural description was added. This process helped the researchers to understand the experiences of the co-researchers with the phenomenon under the investigation. The last step was synthesizing the texture and structure into an expression. In this step, the researchers created narratives from co-researchers which included the textural describing "what" occurred and structural describing "how" it occurred. They listed the meaning units for each co-researcher; after that, they created meaning units common to all co-researchers and created a composite textural and structural descriptions based on the shared meaning units. In the composite textural and structural descriptions, the researchers eliminated individual meaning units in order to create the essence of the phenomena. Composite narratives were written in the manuscript from the third person perspective representing the group of the street sweepers as a whole representing Davao Region. This step served as the synthesis of the all

narratives excerpted from the participants for the group as a whole explaining how the phenomena occurred in Davao Region. The composite structural description was combined into the composite textural description to create a universal description of the phenomenon of the investigation. The purpose of the step was to reach the essence of the experience of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994)[50].

Also, the researchers adhered to the writing strategies as suggested by Creswell (2007)[20]. Quotes which vary their length from short to long embedded passages were used as wording from participants in order to form codes. The quoted words were labelled and intertwined with quotations with the author's interpretation. Other than that, indents and other special formats to emphasize quotations from participants were used also. Moreover, direct linkage of the results presented to the central question then to the sub-questions were highlighted and described as to how narrative outcome was compared with theories and the general literature on the topic.

7. RESULTS

Many if not all street sweepers in the cities of Davao Region are working under job order – an open-ended contract. It was found out that some are renewed after six months of work; others got their contract terminated after three months while there are sweepers also who are working for a month only. After they got laid-off, they can opt to re-apply for another working contract.

In the quest of looking into their lived realities, it was further found out that part of their struggles is the limited working tools being provided for them to perform their daily tasks. Since there are other tools which are unavailable, street sweepers spend their own money in order to perform their job effectively. Other than the plight encountered when it comes to the unavailability of necessary working tools, it is an add-on burden too for the street sweepers the bureaucratic red tape as experienced in their city local government units. Another predicament relevant to bureaucratic red tape is the occasional provision of the supplies needed by the street sweepers to perform their daily work. The absence of the needed supplies lead them to use their personal money in order to purchase such.

As workers under job order status, they are only receiving a daily pay ranging from ₱230 to ₱340. Such daily earning according to the sweepers is not sufficient for them to sustain their daily lives. Aside from the low payment received, they are not receiving salary once they are absent due to the nature of employment. Other than the “no work – no pay” status, they cannot receive work benefits as regular workers do due to the no employer-employee relationship. They are not entitled to regular check-up though, free medicines are given but only for common illnesses only.

Living a life is never been easy for the street sweepers. They do not have permanent work and at all times they

are anxious once their contracts end. As workers under open-ended contract mostly for a long time now, they have this insecurity which led them to develop low self-esteem. Other than the insecurity feels, street sweepers reveal that they are prone to illnesses since most of the time they are exposed to dirt and waste; thus, they are vulnerable in acquiring diseases. Also, as street workers, most of them are assigned in the highway where drivers drive so fast; that makes them prone to vehicular accidents. It is also inevitable for the street sweepers to experience and get into trouble with people just like with the vendors and hooligans

Considering the meager salary and delay in receiving it, street sweepers usually rely on debt to survive and sustain their daily needs. Borrowing goods or money to provide the needs of their family is a usual scenario in their daily lives. Despite the big interest entailing borrowing of money, they availed salary loans from loan sharks.

One way of surviving in their daily work is establishing good relationship with their co-street sweepers. Establishing happy working environment is their way of life. Fostering harmonious relationship with workmates is important for the street sweepers.

In doing their daily tasks, it is unavoidable that there are inconsiderate citizens who throw garbage anywhere. Instead of fighting with them and be insulted they just explain to them to dispose their garbage properly. In their daily quest of life, they accepted the fact that it would be an impossible dream for them to be given a regular position. Thus, most of them just opted in aspiring just some additional benefits instead of looking forward for something in which being deprived to them for many years now.

Living the life they live seemed to be a game of survival of the fittest, those who cannot adapt will not survive. In order to survive, they need to double their effort, they have to do two jobs; a sideline or extra-income is always sought. Amidst the difficulties encountered, the street sweepers in Davao Region still live with the positivity in life to improve their way of living; they are full of hopes and dreams. Their desires inspire them to cope with the difficulties they experience.

One of the things which enables the street sweepers to cope amidst the challenges in their daily life is the possibility that their effort will be noticed and appreciated. Though street sweepers usually receive low social recognition as other people look down on their job, they revealed that they will be happy once recognized and they wish that people would not look down on them because their work is dirty. As they received recognition, they also received insults and bad comments from other people.

In spite of the tedious work of being a street sweeper and knowing the fact that they received limited compensations and benefits, the sweepers in Davao Region are satisfied with their job. They are contented in their daily work as street sweepers; they are even grateful for the given job opportunity for them. Lowly as it is to other people, the

street sweepers love their work as city workers; despite the fact that sweeping is a low wage job, they accepted it as adequate; they are even proud in their work. To add with, the demeaning treatment they received from people because of the nature of their job is not a big obstruction for them to attain contentment in life.

As workers who primarily provide the needs of their family, it is their utmost aspiration to be a regular worker. Unfortunately, attaining such is seemed like an impossible dream in which even up to now still being dreamed by them. As government workers deployed in the street, they portray significant roles in maintaining the cleanliness of the city.

Another worthy insight to ponder is that it is not easy to be a street sweeper as it is a bone-racking job - a tiring job with the presence of a hand full of calluses. In rendering their duties, it is unavoidable for them to work be it on rainy or sunny days just to perform their task without minding too if the area is obnoxious or not.

8. DISCUSSION

8.1 Lived Experiences of the Street Sweepers

No security of tenure

The study revealed that street workers in Davao Region are employed under open-ended contracts which could last from one month to six months, such situation often lead them in comparing themselves from other workers. The felt situation of the street sweepers in Davao Region regarding their short-term contracts was claimed by Falco, et al. (2008) [27] to lead in job dissatisfaction which stems from the theory of social comparison between an individual and that of others. Let us take the case of Davao City which is reputedly report as the largest city in the country in terms of land area (NEDA Region XI, 2017). As per reported by the Davao City – CHRMO office as of June 2017, the City has more than one thousand (1,000) employed street sweepers working at the city LGU alone. The city got no other choice but to implement a revolving scheme in employing street sweepers as accorded to the informants in order to give chance to the aspiring sweepers. The employed revolving scheme is a strategy wherein a worker got a month long contract only; once laid-off they can re-apply for the next scheduled month. It implies that the Local Chief Executives considered the provision of short-term contracts as a way to accommodate queued applicants for the job of street sweeping.

Dearth of necessary work implements

In view of the experiences revealed by the participants of the study, there are shortage of must-have cleaning tools and equipment. The result of the study implies that the limited working tools is an additional burden to the part of the street sweepers as they have to purchase it out from their earnings. This holds true in the case of the Philippines as documented by Andrade (2012)[3] wherein a street sweeper in Metro Manila expressed her sentiments regarding the unavailability of working tools

while doing their daily task. As a worker who has been working for three years as an MMDA sweeper, she has to buy her own working tools such as brooms and dustpans and even pay for her uniform. They are not provided with necessary working tools and this led them to get money from their own pockets. Relevant to the aforementioned scenario, an article in Oxfam in Cambodia (2015) narrates the life of a female Cambodian street cleaner who has been working for 34 years. During the interview, she stated that as street workers they were not provided with safety equipment such as gloves, protection masks and hat. She further added that they do not have insurance as part of compliance with standard of the Occupational Health and Safety. Moreover, they were not provided of drinking water to quench their thirst during their job.

Bureaucratic Red Tape

Working under job under contract not just hinders the street sweepers in the cities Davao Region to receive their salary on time due to human resource management office processes involved but disqualifies them to be paid for rendered overtime work. Other than that, the experience of delayed provision of cleaning supplies due to budget constraint could affect in effectively performing their tasks. Contrary to the delayed receiving of salary as experienced in Davao Region, street sweepers in India received their salary on time as revealed by Sequeira (2015)[73] in a documentary article. In fact, their salaries were even raised after several request which make them happier.

Meager compensation and non-existent benefits

Working under job order or contract of service equates absence of practical work benefits. Aside from job security, basic benefits as enjoyed by regular employees are being deprived to be given to the workers under open-ended contract. Contractualization in the Philippine context is a system which has been long practiced not just by the National Government Agencies but also by a lot of large companies in the country. It is defined as a work arrangement between the employer and worker wherein both agreed that the latter will just be given only about five months to work with exclusions on security of tenure, monetary, non-monetary and social protection benefits. It was argued by Kamau (2013)[37] that fringe benefits or work benefits must be given importance when it comes to employment in order to maintain the quality of life for employees thus to provide them a level of protection including financial security for them and for their family. As important as it is, job order street sweepers in Davao Region are left with no choice but to grab the opportunity of having a work even with the absence of benefits. In as much as they would like to demand for such privileges, Philippine Labor Code Article 219 inhibits them due to the established “no employer-employee relationship” nature of employment.

Insecurity and Vulnerability

Street sweepers in Davao Region are solely depending on their jobs when it comes to provision of their daily needs. Many of them are having dependent spouse relying only

with their street sweeping job to sustain daily life. Since their work is a time-demanding job, most of them got no other means in earning extra income. Such situation is akin in the documented article of Ibekwe (2015)[34] regarding a street sweeper in Nigeria named Kafayat who told her experience as worker dependent in the street sweeping job. Kafayat relies on this job to sustain their daily expenses since her husband happened to have three wives. While fulfilling her day to day job as street sweeper, she independently takes care of her children. For her, the choice was between street sweeping and hunger. That, there is more to sweeping and cleaning the streets rather than watching your family suffer from hunger. Chowdhury (2011) cited similar situation which is felt in Bangladesh where sweepers are found being deprived from socio economic advantage and sweeping becomes the only means for survival. The latter revealed the dark and vulnerable situation of the sweepers in Bangladesh where the author stressed out the necessity for the Bangladesh government to provide immediate action to uplift and reform their livelihood and profession. It was then recommended that government should arrange some technical education to overcome the hindrance as experienced by the concerned sweeper. As experienced also in other locality in the Philippines, the Municipality of Torrijos, Province of Marinduque initiated reforms on the life of their street sweepers who have been depending on the job. They engaged their street sweepers especially women in economic and livelihood activities which serve as an opportunity for them to earn a living for their family (Municipality of Torrijos, 2012). Uncertainty is what they are living with in their daily quest of life. Take a note in this simple illustration, a typical sweeper in the Davao Region usually earns between ₱230 – ₱340 daily equivalent to \$5 to \$7. Such daily earning is considered insufficient for a family with a dependent spouse and at least one dependent.

Low-paid compensation is observed also by D'Arcy and Hurrell (2014)[21] in United Kingdom (UK) as there are employees who are receiving low pay; but, considering their situation, UK government usually provide them an opportunity in gaining higher paying roles. In the case of Philippines to be specific in Davao Region where street sweepers are mostly working under open-ended contracts, they lack the opportunity of getting promoted unless considered for any regular position with plantilla item. To add with, the amendment of the Philippine Labor Code also known as Herrera Law restricted them to be compensated once absent and disintitled them to receive overtime pay unless requested. The fact that they are not receiving their salary on-time is a manifestation of one of the disadvantages of being a short-term contract worker. Such situation is akin to the poorly paid street sweepers in Hongkong wherein they are being deprived of basic employment benefits due to the government's policy of outsourcing its cleaning service (Ngo, 2014)[54]. When it comes to vulnerability, Sabde and Zodpey (2008)[68] revealed in their study that street sweepers are

susceptible to develop and acquire diseases as they are exposed to different risk factors such as dust, dirt, toxins and diesel exhaust pollution. It was also found out in their study that chronic bronchitis is the most common disease among the street sweepers. It was supported in the work of Johncy et al. (2013)[35] that sweepers are chronically exposed to dust raised during sweeping. Dust is regarded as the most influential agent and it is perceived as a frequent cause of respiratory system illness and may cause acute and chronic lung. The authors then recommended that for the protection of the workers, appropriate respiratory protective masks and educating them why the need to use it is a must to do. The fact the street sweepers in the Davao Region are not using protective health gears since they find using it uneasy, they are more vulnerable in acquiring health problems. Similar case relating to health has been reported in Dhaka City wherein street sweepers are doing manual process in doing their street sweeping job. Just like what the sweepers in Davao Region, they are often exposed to a variety of risks factors such as exhaust fumes, extreme noise, toxic substances and dust particles. The lack of basic safety equipment during work was emphasized by Kabir (2015)[36] why the sweepers are commonly affected of frequent infections and injuries. To add with, a sad situation in Cambodia was documented in Oxfam in Cambodia (2015) detailing the life of the street workers who work under the heat of the sun around 37 to 41 degrees Celsius. The said street sweepers have to drink water from the public tub in the park where cleanliness is not guarantee since they cannot afford to buy drinking water for the whole day. As reported, these street cleaners are facing high risk in life due to improper sanitation not to mention the possibility of being involved in traffic accidents in which some of the street sweepers in Davao Region experienced due to the reckless drivers and insufficient equipment used in the body. Talking about danger in the road as street sweeper, the aforementioned situations are congruent to the point of view of Fletcher (2016) who noted that accidents are most often caused by drivers who failed to follow traffic signs and signals, drivers who fail to check their blind spot, fatigued drivers, inexperienced drivers, or drivers who operate a vehicle while under the influence of either drugs or alcohol. Such scenario happened to some of the sweepers in the Davao Region as interviewed wherein they got bumped into the car while doing their task in the highway.

8.2. Coping Mechanisms

Loan Dependence

Solving a problem usually requires solution for it to be solved; but, in the life of the street sweepers in Davao Region they engage to another problem in solving their challenges in order to cope with it. Street sweepers become dependent in borrowing money or goods in order to counter the financial crisis they are experiencing. While other workers usually wait for the day they will

receive their salary, street sweepers in Davao Region are waiting for other thing and that is when they will be able to renew for a loan since their salary is loaned already to loan shark. For them to survive, they are left with no choice but to avail a salary loan accompanied with big interest rate. As they become dependent to debt, paying their debtors become their most priority rather than providing the daily needs of the family. The situation led the sweepers to get anxious daily while doing their job while looking for ways and means to survive. Debt can cause a lot of suffering and agony to the individuals who experience difficulty paying their bills (Dragon, 2017)[24]. The same situation was experienced by the Bangladeshi sweepers in who are also living in between poverty wherein they are depending on loan from informal sector (Chowdhury, 2011).

Perseverance and Fidelity to the Job

It cannot be denied that the street sweepers in Davao Region are in quest to endure the survival of the fittest considering their lived experiences. Even by that, their motivation to move forward, to toil harder and to strive further is comparably heavier than their encountered predicaments. They work harder for them to be rehired (since their daily work and accomplishment is being monitored and checked by immediate supervisor) thus to continuously sustain the daily needs of their family. In Maslow's Theory of Motivation, the first thing that motivates the behaviour of a certain person is the basic needs for physical survival. Indeed people become motivated to fulfil their own needs but in this case sweepers are more motivated to work considering that this is the only way they can support the needs of their family. As reinforced by Menges (2016), supporting a family can boost performance in the workplace because it provides a powerful source of motivation to employees.

A documentary article by Ibekwe (2015) tells about the life of a street sweeper named Kafayat was published in Nigeria. For her, the choice was between street sweeping and hunger. She added that there is more to sweeping and cleaning the streets rather than watching her family suffer from hunger. Providing the needs of her family motivates her to do her daily job even if other people would insult and make fun of her for doing such a dirty and lowly paid job. Other than being motivated due because of the family they need to support, external motivators are factors too. Considering they have a decent job, the positive recognition acquired and rewards given towards their work once they did well keep them motivated. External motivation theory suggests that it is the outside environment of an individual which controlled the satisfaction of an employee. To be specific, the Reinforcement Theory made popular by Skinner (1930) tells us that one way to motivate workers is to reward them for their job well done and to give punishment for undesirable performance (Larson & Hewitt, 2012)[41].

In addition, fighting spirit and the will to survive the daily life is part of the coping strategies acquired by the sweepers in the Davao Region. The instability of their life

does not let them being persuaded not to continue living and survive challenges in life. Self-determination is something that they are holding for which enables them to manage life difficulties. Unstable as they are when it comes to economic aspect, their psychological well-being remains unwavering and their physical ability is still strong. To relate with, the way how street sweepers in Davao Region assess their way of life and deal with it complemented the thought of Self-Determination Theory by Schiffbauer (2013)[70] that it is the inner motivational resources of a human being which enable one person to address psychological well-being and autonomous self-regulation.

Detachment and Nonchalance

Colleagues in workplace undeniably served as a great influence and factor affecting the performance, productivity and satisfaction of an employee. An employee's feedback revealed in TinyPulse (2013)[79] that there are days wherein she wonder where she could make more money elsewhere but then she remember how much she enjoy the people she work with and realize that money is not everything. Sweepers in Davao Region developed team work in accomplishing their daily task in sweeping. They seldom come to a point of getting troubled with workmates as they prefer not to argue and establish harmonious relationship with everyone. As a result, everybody becomes an aid of anybody in doing the job detailed to them. The role of their supervisor is an important contributor in letting the sense of belongingness to be felt in the workplace. It can be noted in the employer's feedback as mentioned in the aforementioned quoted statement that a presence of a colleague is also a provider of happiness in ones work; that is also why the sweepers in Davao Region happily doing their job in the workplace with colleagues as akin to the shared experience in the latter feedback of the employee.

To add with, the presence of having a considerate supervisor is one thing that the street sweepers are grateful as they are doing their daily task. Giving consideration when it comes to coping absences in order for them not be deducted with their salary and flexibility of working schedule when needed are some things they admire as support given by the supervisor to the sweepers. Turcotte and Gaudet (2013)[81] make a stand that freedom of workers to choose their work periods, within certain limits, has a much more significant impact. Though the street sweepers usually have a fixated schedule due to their nature of job, the occasional support given to them is a big help already for the sweepers. At least they are being compensated for the days wherein scheduled are specially arrange for the sake of not being deducted in their pay as they are workers under no work, no pay.

Giving value to the employees means giving value to the organization. That is the thought of Beheshtifar and Zare (2012)[7] wherein the authors emphasized that employers should support their workers since it will lead to positive organizational outcome. Inasmuch as the CLGUs would

like to give maximum compensation to the street sweepers when it comes to monetary and necessary benefits, the nature of their employment hindered them to achieve such.

In the absence of practical health benefits as being constrained due to the nature of their employment, CLGUs find ways to provide the street sweepers the must-have support just like free medicines, free vitamins, health gear tools and working equipment. Though limiting and not available as always, it is still a big help for the street sweepers to perform their task effectively. Ewis, et al. (2013)[26] recalled the need of the street sweepers to be offered with periodic medical examination and supplying personal protective equipment as this could be a safety measures considering their hazardous job and when protective measures applied was little.

Moonlighting

Amidst the difficulties encountered, the street sweepers in Davao Region are still possessed with positivity in life to somewhat improve their way of living. Though being constrained by time, they still find ways to earn additional income other than sweeping. Be it having a Sari-Sari store, doing other's laundry and being a massager, they are go for it in hope that it could be an aid in sustaining daily expenses. Finding ways to earn extra income can completely change an individual's life for the better. Schroeder-Gardner (2017) suggested that people especially those low-earners need to learn on how to make more money in new ways to survive the harsh reality of life.

Wishful Thinking

Amidst the status of living the street sweepers in Davao Region lived to experience, they are still full of hopes and dreams which push them to survive daily life. Simple as it is, what they want most in life is to be able to eat three times a day, to have a house they can call their own, and be given with free medical attention. Sherwood (1989) defined aspiration as future goals in life wherein a person makes use of money, time and effort to achieve such. In this particular definition, the author ought to divert the focus of aspiration from the goals sought by an individual to the available resources they have and how they could make use of it to pursue their goals. Such definition is appropriate considering the faced reality of the street sweepers in Davao Region living in the simplest simplicity they could have in their lives.

Part of the desires of the street sweepers is for their load to be lightened with the help of the citizens. They hope for the people to become accountable in their own waste and to dispose their garbage properly in order to lessen their work. Concrete example of considerate citizens can be found in the large numbers of the residents in Owerri Municipal wherein most of them are aware about waste management and the methods of waste disposal. Majority of the people there had a positive attitude towards proper waste management (Adogu et al., 2015)[1]. In so doing, the latter author emphasized that when coordination is done between the street sweeper, citizen and policy

implementer with regards to strict adherence to appropriate waste management practices, it will improve the living standard of the people as it will protect the inhabitants from harmful environmental conditions.

There are similar cases also wherein citizens are doing inappropriate actions regarding waste disposal. In Urban Accra, food debris and plastics were the majority of the solid waste generated at home and stored in uncovered plastic containers and disposed without separation. Some community members practiced crude dumping in any available space. To solve problem regarding the improper implementation of waste management, the community expressed interest in controlling waste disposal through proper education of the public, provision of more communal trash bins, and the collection of waste by private contractors that could help prevent exposing the public in municipalities to diseases (Yoda, Chirawurah, & Adongo, 2014)[87].

Flor (2007)[31] in his video documentary dubbed as "A Day in the Life of a Street Sweeper" narrates the life of Angelina who is working as street sweeper for nine years since 1998. Angelina finds out her reason of living and that is to do sweeping. Even though she does not earn a lot, still, she is happy being given a chance to help the community in a small way. It is hard for her to save money since she is living with many dependents. Her only wish before she die is to save money for her burial.

8.3. Insights and Lessons

Street sweepers desire recognition and respect

Street sweepers in the Davao Region are just few of those sweepers around the world who experience low social recognition. A documentary article by Ibekwe (2015)[34] published in Nigeria tells about the life of a street sweeper named Kafayat. Kafayat, a street sweeper, shared her story when she first had this job. She said that people would insult and make fun of her for doing such a dirty and lowly paid job. Another instance is a 45-year-old sweeper in India documented by Sequeira (2015)[73] who shared her story every time she ride a bus. The sweeper relates that there are times wherein she does not even get a place to sit in the bus since there are some people who look at her with disdain. She further added that wearing her pourakarmika (sweeper) uniform does not get her any kind of respect.

Based on the social psychology of authored by Bjarnason (2009), individuals developed ideas about themselves, their identity and how they feel about who they are based on the responses they received from their social environment. This situation is akin to what has been experiencing by the street sweepers in Davao Region. Knowing that they obtain low educational qualification, they established this notion that street sweeping is for those who have poor education. Being a street worker who deals with filth and garbage daily, they felt how almost everyone perceived their job as a lowly one which led them in developing low self-esteem as worker which

is often associated to poor performance since self-confidence according to the Self-efficacy theory of Bandura (1986)[5] is considered as the most influential motivators and regulators of one's behaviour in dealing daily life.

Since most sweepers in the Davao Region are poorly educated, they treat it as reason why they are bound to do the sweeping job. As they are exposed to filth and waste, they treat their job as a lowly occupation. The fact that most people treat their job as a menial one, sometimes they think that they are insignificant. Though they are proud being a city street sweeper, they have low self-esteem. Baumeister, et al. (2003)[6] then concluded that self-esteem is thus a perception rather than a reality. The authors added that job performance for adult workers is sometimes related to self-esteem which has a strong relation to happiness. Though the street sweepers in Davao Region seem to develop low self-esteem, it was never raised in this undertaking that it leads them to become an unproductive worker.

The low social recognition which led the sweepers to feel intimidated eventually leads them to lower their self-esteem. In the case of Bulgaria where street sweeping is done manually, a sweeper has low social prestige, popular among the society as humiliating, and was given a low compensation. Even by that, sweepers are satisfied with the little they have and will do much to keep it despite the low working conditions. They give different examples related to a sense of pride in a job well done, and the bitterness that society underestimates their efforts and people often do not recognize the work of sweeper. They are trying to increase their own self-esteem and self-confidence, seeking an additional meaning and social value of what they do because they are afraid of losing jobs (Markova, 2012). It was then emphasized by Ferris et al. (2010) that low self-esteem must be given attention as it is usually linked to under-performance, lack of initiative and depression.

There is pride and satisfaction in what we do

The Bulgarian sweepers in the study of Markova (2012) are highly satisfied in their job for it offers job security and they are able to pay their debts, support their family who are still unemployed, and are able to make ends meet. Job satisfaction is associated with workers' commitment, motivation, and productivity which are considered as factors to a successful organization. So, in order for the workers to strengthen their commitment, motivation, and productivity, Afridi et al. (2016)[2] stressed that employers should give a higher budget on incentives to the employees, be it tangible or intangible.

In the case in Davao Region where street sweepers are still working even without a security of tenure, they are still satisfied with their job. Low wage and low status job does not always associate to low level of job satisfactions. Having a street sweeping job is considered by the workers in Davao Region as an opportunity. They are grateful, happy, contented and most importantly they love their work as city street sweeper. Salary is unequally important

in different circumstances, situations or individuals (Rynes et al., 2004)[66].

It was supported in the findings of Markova (2012)[45] as the author stressed that individuals look both ways; upward and downward. Downward assumption gives low aspiration bounds in which people expects the minimum and acceptable working conditions. On the other hand, upward assumption gives high aspiration bounds, where in people expects the best quality of working conditions in the labor market. This means that individuals conforms or adapt to how the environment runs.

Relevant scenario can be observed in the lived realities of the street sweepers in Davao Region. Though deprived with job security to add with the low earnings received, they demonstrate attainment of satisfaction in life. Satisfaction for them is about ability to buy daily foods; as such they are contented with it already. They claimed to be satisfied and pleased in the daily living. Aligned with their job, though somewhat they can say that they have a low status job, they accepted it as satisfactory. They even considered their job as a way for them to exercise; happiness is what they get the moment they accomplish their task.

The aforementioned situation conforms to the environmental adaptation by Poggi (2010)[59] wherein the author pointed out that one can adjust perceptions about the lived reality especially when a bad working condition is being experienced. To add with, German Sociologist Wolfgang Zapf tells us that in reality there are workers like the street sweepers in Davao Region who are living in a deprived condition yet claimed to be satisfied with their life (Zapf, 1984). This phenomenon is termed as satisfaction paradox and Wolfgang Zapf referred these people as adapted.

Job security continues to be an elusive dream

The proposed House Bill 03434 "An Act of Instituting Policies for the Protection and Welfare of Cleaning Workers such as Street Sweepers and Garbage Collectors" by Congresswoman Florida P. Robes - District Representative San Jose Del Monte City is a push by the latter district representative to constitute a law which would answer the dilemma of the street workers with regards to absence of security of tenure and benefits and low compensation in their job. Unfortunately, the said house bill is still pending with the Committee on Labor and Employment since September 7, 2016.

As observed, most street sweepers in Davao Region in particular and in the Philippines in general are employed in contractual or seasonal basis. One primary reason for the street sweepers not being given the opportunity of regular employment is that the CLGUs as their employers have reached the ceiling for the allotted personnel services as prescribed by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM).

The above situation happens in the case of Davao City- the country's largest city. Way back 2015, Marcelino Escalada – OIC of the City Planning and Development Office of Davao City stated during his interview as

reported by Rappler (2015)[62] that there were no space for more plantilla workers in the city and it has been issued that the City cannot hire security personnel, traffic enforcers and those in solid waste management specially the street sweeper and garbage collectors as plantilla workers due to fact that Davao might hit the 45% of the ceiling for personnel services as being prescribed by the DBM. President Rodrigo Duterte who was the mayor way back then was even questioned by the Commission on Audit (COA) for hiring huge number of contractual and job order workers.

While the way City government of Davao considered act-utilitarianism (a teleological theory which holds that an act is right if and only if it brings about the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people) in hiring thousands of street workers as a way to give employment and to answer the need in maintaining the cleanliness of the City, Falco, et al. (2008) in their study stressed out that employees with temporary contracts perceived themselves as disadvantaged in job security, has feelings of inequality and deprivation. Even then, out of no choice, the City government of Davao opt to employ those sweepers even under revolving one-month contract for as long as they adhere to the Civil Service Memorandum Circular No. 020790 – Policy Guidelines for Contract of Services.

Environmental responsibility among citizenry needs to be cultivated

A documentary article in India told by Sequeira (2015) tells the life of a street sweeper who has been working for the last 15 years. The sweeper begins her day at the break of dawn and steps out of her house to clean the road. She narrates her experience that what she find most difficult is cleaning mixed waste on the roads. She added that dry and wet waste are never separated and wish that people would separate them before throwing. She means to say that there are people who are inconsiderate by throwing their garbage anywhere. Though it is tiring for her to clean assigned area of responsibility, she just ignores it and bear with the situation as it becomes part of her job. The same reality has been experiencing by the street sweepers in Davao Region due to the presence of inconsiderate people who are not throwing their garbage in proper disposal. Additional workload incurred for the sweepers as they are tasked then to segregate garbage based on classification as demanded under RA 9003 Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000.

Aside from doing errands other than sweeping, part of their job is to mentor newly hired sweepers. Wandera (2011) relates that the productivity of staff in the organization is affected since training new employee takes time compared to retaining old employees. But considering the employment case as deployed in the region, turn-over rate of sweepers is unavoidable and just needed to be countered by training new sweepers hired.

A street sweeper's work is hard and unenviable

Working as street sweeper is considered as a bone-racking job since it demands physical strength. With hand full of

calluses they are confronted with unpredicted weather condition not to mention the volume of garbage they are facing daily. In India, a 45-year-old street sweeper was interviewed to share her life about her job. She then stressed that she worked seven days a week since there are so many waste everywhere that her broom is not enough and she is exhausted by the end of the day.

Due to the hectic job accompanied with time-demanding schedule, the Indian sweeper told that she cannot even attend the need of her daughter. The study of Raziq and Maulabakhsh (2015)[63] opined that working environment has a positive relationship with employee job satisfaction and comment that an organization must realize the importance of good working environment for maximizing the level of job satisfaction. Such could not be applicable to a blue-collar work like street sweeping where working environment is expected to be not pleasant as compared to those who are working in offices. In reality, street sweepers usually confront garbage and people who are throwing that garbage.

In addition, when it comes to the provision of training and seminar, there are few if none are being initiated for them to update skill relevant to their job or even other opportunity in case of being laid-off just like livelihood training or program. Chowdhury (2011)[14] points out to the concerned government and even non-government sector that an immediate action is deemed necessary to uplift and reform the profession and livelihood of the sweepers.

Lowly as it is to many, street sweepers in Davao Region portray various role. They are significant workers as they are held responsible in maintaining the sanitation and hygiene of the city. They even act as regulator in implementing the cleanliness of the city. They are doing extra errands other than sweeping by mentoring other newly hired sweepers and by disseminating proper waste disposal to the citizen. With that, they are contributors in boosting the economy of the cities in Davao Region.

Performing their job exposes them to variety of risk such as dust, bio aerosols, volatile organic matter and mechanical stress, which makes them vulnerable to occupational disease (Reddy, 2013)[64]. They are prone on getting chronic diseases; hence, the use of productive devices such as, goggles and mask to avoid exposure on occupational and hazardous mask and occupational health services should be provided which includes regular health examinations (Sabde & Zodepy, 2008)[68].

8.4. Implications for Practice

Under the Republic Act No. 7160 also known as the "Local Government Code of 1991", specifically in Section 325 (General Limitations), the total appropriation of a city local government unit for personal services whether annual or supplemental for one fiscal year should not exceed to 45% (first to third class cities) and 55% in the case of fourth class or lower of the total annual income from regular sources (Department of Budget and

Management, 2016). In adherence to the said act, it hinders the CLGUs to hire street sweepers on a regular basis specifically the City of Davao who presently have more than one thousand (1,000) sweepers since the city almost reached the ceiling prescribed by the DBM (Andrade, 2012)[3].

Inasmuch as the CLGUs would like to give regular positions to street sweepers, they are bound in providing job under open-ended contract. The payment for the contract of service and job orders is drawn from the Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) of the hiring offices. Job orders and contractual employees are not considered government employees and they are being hired based on specific works which needed to be done. The general rule is that their compensation are taken out from the MOOE but it is the Commission on Audit (COA) which determines how it is disbursed.

The International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of the Racial Discrimination agreement wherein Philippines is a member country, the government is bound to fulfil the basic needs of the employment, houses, education, healthcare services of lower cast people (United Nations Human Rights, 2017). Article II Section 9 of 1987 Philippine Constitution stipulates that the State shall promote a just and dynamic social order that will ensure the prosperity and independence of the nation and free the people from poverty through policies that provide adequate social services, promote full employment, arising standard of living and an improved quality life for all.

The aforementioned legal bases give necessity for the Philippine government to take an action towards protecting and promoting the welfare of the street sweepers. They are working under-open contracts for many years and due to the nature of their employment, they are living with the absence of practical benefits and limited support and services are being provided. However, due to the amendment of Philippine Labor Code, commonly known as the Herrera Law, street sweepers are still now under open-ended contracts and deprived with benefits that come with being a regular employee such as paid leaves, bonuses, overtime, contributions, health insurance coverage and other benefits. In order to address the issue on compensation and benefits, CSC-COA-DBM Joint Circular No. 1, series of 2017 provides the rules on the payment of services under individual contract of service and job order (Civil Service Commission, 2017). As part of the provision of the Joint circular, individuals hired through contract of service will be paid according to the prevailing market rates subject to the provisions of Republic Act No. 9184 or the "Government Procurement Reform Act" and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR). To add with, the Joint Circular provides options to individuals hired through contract of service to enroll themselves in social benefit programs such as the SSS, PhilHealth and Pag-IBIG Fund as self-employed members.

The current scenario requires proper coordination with concerning national government agencies (NGAs), business sectors and organizations which provided insurance and benefits, the consideration of outsourcing street sweeping could be an option. Given the limitations the CLGUs can provide to the street sweepers when it comes to security of tenure, alternative option as mentioned can possibly solve the dilemma of job stability. For instance, a city of Tarrant County-Texas saves \$27,600 per year for shifting to contract sweeping services. Other than Tarrant County- Texas, Sparks - Nevada, Kenilworth- Illinois are also doing the same which enables the city to save money on personnel and equipment maintenance cost. Costa Mesa, California solved the pension crisis of the city and budget gap by outsourcing too (FlagShip Report, 2017).

Another possible option is the offering of cross-training which could help them qualify for open positions within the city. Though outsourcing services on contract sweeping led to displaced street worker in Palo Alto City; such initiative give their street sweepers a chance to be promoted or reassigned. Such strategy can be possibly applied in the case of the cities in Davao Region for street sweepers to have the chance and possibility to get promoted or be qualified to any selected positions in the city or other agencies as long as they are being trained to be a well-equipped worker in which CLGUs are not providing when it comes to trainings and seminars for employees' skill development.

8.5. Implications for Future Research

The phenomenological inquiry employed in this qualitative study sparks an evidence-based information which can be used by the concerning government institutions specifically the city local government units in enhancing the quality of life of our street sweepers in the country who are working under the employment status of job order. I highlighted their feelings and sentiments on their daily quest of life for them to gain empathy from the general public in order to engender more sensitivity towards their needs.

In the field of public policy and program administration, this undertaking provided valuable data which can be of used in aid of policy formulation especially in the enactment of House Bill 3434 known as "Cleaning Workers Act" which is still pending in the Committee on Labor and Employment since September 9, 2016. This endeavor would serve as a medium in letting the voices of these vulnerable group of workers be heard; a noble output with the aim of providing the dignity of life that they deserved. Moreover, the generated information in this research is expected to stimulate a scholarly debate in the field of academe which could be contributed in the limited database of the topic.

Indeed street sweeping job is a time-demanding work. The fixated schedule as assigned delimits them to perform other activities. No social involvement, no extra-income

and being dependent in their job are the realities faced by the sweet sweepers in Davao Region. With the limited compensation they received, they are burdened with excess expenditures. Since this is how they usually face life, they become reliant on borrowing from loan shark without even considering the big interest rate applied as they have to pay it. They come to be overloaded with debt and prioritizing payment of borrowed money become their utmost concern.

Sweeping is the sole source of income in providing and sustaining daily needs of their family. No livelihood opportunity has been initiated to somehow uplift their way of living. If in case they will no longer be rehired as city street worker, it is a big question where they can get new hired considering most of their life has been spent in doing the used street sweeping job. If job security cannot be provided as constrained, initiating programs such as livelihood development or any trainings and seminar that would equipped the street sweeper with necessary skills for them to have another source of income as additional earnings can be considered.

CLGUs in Davao Region can consider tapping the help of the available agencies which could provide the street sweepers the training of any livelihood program which could become another source of income other than sweeping. Provision of necessary trainings and seminar are not just helping them to become a competent and skilled individual but also a way for them to develop self-confidence other than being a proud city street sweeper with high self-esteem.

8.6. Concluding Paragraphs

Low income, unstable job, absence of benefits and low social recognition; these are the daily struggles encountered by the sweepers as they are bound to fulfil their duty. Considering their working environment, they are vulnerable to any untoward incidents; it is an unavoidable scenario that they could contract disease, get into accident and even worse, face death. This undertaking served as a medium for them to raise their voice, to share the whole world how they live their lives and how it is to become like them and for the people to hear their sentiments with the hope of creating awareness for the Philippine government most especially to the concerning government agencies to name a few: Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Department of Budget and Management (DBM), Department of Health (DOH) Department of Social Work and Development (DSWD) and Technical education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) and even the concerned Non-government Organizations (NGOs) be it local to international, to facilitate effective employment for these vulnerable group of workers. It is with big hope that the generated findings in this undertaking would serve as an aid to push forward the passing of House Bill 03434 for it to become a law and input for the government most especially the regulatory organizations

to identify appropriate and necessary protocols that may enhance the quality of life of the street workers who are enduring in the vicious cycle of poverty.

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